

BINGEN ON THE RHINE

A Soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers ;
There was lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of woman's tears ;
But a comrade stood beside him, while his life blood ebbed away,
And bent with pitying glances, to hear what he might say.
The dying soldier faltered, as he took that comrade's hand,
And he said : I never more shall see my own, my native land,
Take a message, and a token to some distant friends of mine,
For I was born at Bingen, at Bingen on the Rhine.

Tell my brothers and companions, when they meet and crowd around
To hear my mournful story, in the pleasant vine-yard ground,
That we fought the battle bravely, and when the day was done,
Full many a corse lay ghastly pale, beneath the setting sun ;
And midst the dead and dying, were some grown old in wars,
The death-wound on their gallant breasts, the last of many soars ;
But some were young, and suddenly beheld life's morn decline,
And one had come from Bingen, fair Bingen on the Rhine !

Tell my mother that her other sons shall comfort her old age,
And I was, aye, a truant bird, that thought his home a cage ;
For my father was a soldier, and, even as a child,
My heart leaped forth to hear him tell of struggles fierce and wild.
And when he died and left us to divide his scanty board,
I let them take whate'er they would—but kept my father's sword, —
And, with boyish love, I hung it where the bright light used to shine,
On the Cottage wall at Bingen—oalm Bingen on the Rhine.

Tell my sisters not to weep for me, and sob with drooping head,
When the troops are marching home again, with glad and gallant tread ;
But to look upon them proudly, with a calm and steadfast eye ;
For her brother was a soldier, too, and not afraid to die—
And if a comrade seek her love, I ask her, in my name,
To listen to him kindly, without regret or shame ;
And to hang the old sword in its place, (my father's sword and mine)
For the honor of old Bingen—dear Bingen on the Rhine !

There's ANOTHER—not a sister—in the happy days gone by—
You'd have known her by the merriment that sparkled in her eye ;
Too innocent for coquetry—too fond for idle scorning—
Oh ! friend, I fear the lightest heart makes sometimes heaviest mourning !
Tell her that the last night of my life, (for, ere this moon be risen,
My body will be out of pain—my soul be out of prison) :
I dreamed I stood with HER, and saw the yellow sunlight shine
On the vine clad-hill of Bingen—fair Bingen on the Rhine !

I saw the blue Rhine sweep along—I heard, or seemed to hear
The German songs we used to sing, in chorus sweet and clear ;
And down the pleasant river, and up the slanting hill,
That echoing chorus sounded through the evening calm and still ;
And her glad blue eyes were on me, as we passed, with friendly talk,
Down many a path beloved of yore, and well remembered walk ;
And her little hand lay lightly, confidently in mine,
But we'll meet no more at Bingen—loved Bingen on the Rhine !

His voice grew faint and hoarser—his grasp was childish weak—
His eyes put on a dying look—he sighed, and ceased to speak—
His comrade bent to lift him, but the spark of life had fled ;
The soldier of the Legion in a foreign land was dead !
And the soft moon rose up slowly, and calmly she looked down
On the red sand of the battle-field, with bloody corpses strewn ;
Yea, calmly on that dreadful scene, her pale light seemed to shine,
As it shone on distant Bingen—fair Bingen on the Rhine !